

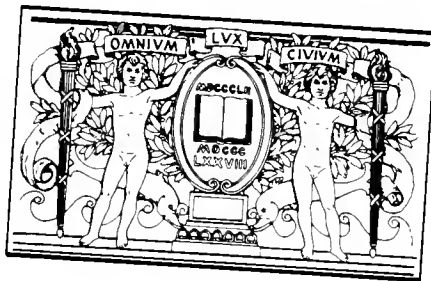
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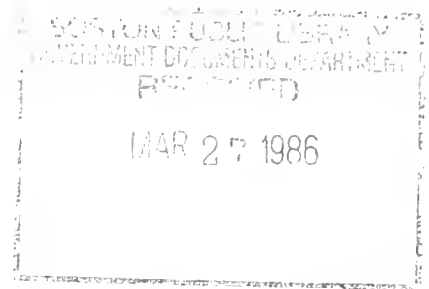












# THE BOSTON EDUCATION PLAN

LAVAL S. WILSON  
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS  
BOSTON  
MASSACHUSETTS





THE BOSTON EDUCATION PLAN

PHASE ONE

APPROVED MARCH 11, 1986

BY

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**SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE**

It is vital that we in the Boston Public Schools have clear priorities and know where we are going over time. Because I believe this so strongly, I have made the development of a long-range plan one of my major goals as Superintendent. The Boston Education Plan will systematically identify our most critical problem areas, carefully map strategies to solve them, and boldly allocate resources to bring about major improvements in each priority area.


I am pleased to announce that the first phase of the development of the Boston Education Plan is complete. We have reached out to all constituencies inside and outside the school system, giving everyone a chance to help develop a mission statement and decide on the initiatives needed to accomplish that mission. Our outreach effort was unprecedented in scope, and it has already created the kind of ownership and excitement about the Boston Education Plan that makes me very optimistic about the plan's ultimate success.

Using the extensive input and drawing upon the resources of my staff and my own experience as a professional educator, I have identified sixteen critical issues for long-range planning. On the pages that follow, you will find the major components of the first phase of the Boston Education Plan: the mission statement and a preamble, the long-range planning priorities, the process used to arrive at these priorities, and the results of a questionnaire distributed to the BPS community in January, 1986.

Deciding on the final list of sixteen priorities was a difficult process. A wide range of issues attracted support from different constituencies in our community, and persuasive arguments were made for including virtually every issue on the list. But priority cannot be given to all areas at once, and hard choices had to be made. In some cases, issues were not chosen because major progress has been made in recent years. Let me emphasize that the absence of an issue from the list of priorities will not prevent us from pursuing it through normal administrative channels.

Now that the School Committee has approved our list of priority issues, Project Managers will be appointed and task forces assembled in each area, and they will produce detailed strategic plans by summer. Even before the plans are complete, however, the planning priorities will influence the 1986-87 budget and have a direct impact on school-site planning and central office goal-setting for the coming year.

I want to thank all those who have contributed to the first phase of the planning process. The Boston Education Plan will be the major driving force in the BPS for several years, mobilizing change and attracting support to the school system. When we look over the list of sixteen priority areas in the future, we will see measurable progress in every one, and classrooms and schools throughout the BPS will be significantly better as a result. I look forward to your continuing support and help as we continue this exciting effort.

  
Laval S. Wilson  
Superintendent

# THE BOSTON EDUCATION PLAN

## BPS MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Boston Public Schools is to give all students an excellent basic education and the chance to expand their abilities and talents to the fullest. Our goal is to graduate students who are prepared to compete in the world, who get along with people of diverse backgrounds, who think for themselves, and who enjoy and appreciate life. This mission is based on the firm belief that all children can learn and all schools can be effective.

Whether we fulfill this mission depends on the quality of each school. Good schools are communities of learners that foster the personal and intellectual development of students and staff, making all feel valued and valuable. Good schools have a number of key characteristics: strong instructional leadership, a shared sense of mission, collegiality within the staff, effective teaching, high expectations of all students, a safe and humane climate, a decent facility, focus on basic skills, clear academic goals, ongoing use of test results, multicultural acceptance, and parent and community support.

## PREAMBLE

In recent years, four major initiatives have been undertaken in the Boston Public Schools. First, new curriculum objectives have been developed in all subject areas, and a reduced list of textbooks has been chosen based on these objectives. The challenge is now to implement the curriculum in classrooms, which involves teacher training, instructional materials, and on-going support. Second, major progress has also been made by the Boston Compact on school planning and job placement. The challenge is now to focus on the dropout rate and the needs of at-risk students. Third, there has been a major effort to pilot school-site management and planning, and a structure for planning is now in place for all schools, supported by the Office of School Assistance. The challenge is now to improve the planning and school improvement efforts underway in every school and explore ways to further increase the school-site decision-making and accountability of principals and headmasters. Fourth, a new performance evaluation process was put in place four years ago, and it has brought about marked increases in the accountability of all staff. The challenge is now to refine the process and link it to an expanded program of professional development and support.

The Boston Public Schools have also made significant strides in several other areas in recent years. Major improvement efforts are under way in Special Education and Bilingual, supported by substantial budgetary commitments and maintained and reinforced by court orders. Great progress has been made in purchasing computers for all schools and providing training for staff. Testing, now part of a new Office of Research and Development, is beginning to receive the kind of modifications that field personnel have requested. Finally, the merger of the Humphrey Center and Madison Park High is an unparalleled opportunity to upgrade and rethink vocational/occupational/career education.

All of these areas of progress and potential progress provide groundwork for the initiatives of the Boston Education Plan, which are listed on the following pages.

## **BOSTON EDUCATION PLAN INITIATIVES**

### **1. Adolescent Issues**

Improving crisis intervention and support and instituting prevention programs to deal with the problems of teenage pregnancy, alcohol and drug abuse, suicide, and child abuse.

### **2. At-Risk Students**

Developing a comprehensive program to meet the needs of all students who are not working up to grade-level expectations, are not meeting Promotion Policy standards, and are therefore in danger of failing and dropping out. This includes remediation, alternative teaching methods and materials, peer tutoring, alternative programs and schools, after-hours programs, summer schools, re-entry programs, and other initiatives.

### **3. Counseling and Guidance**

Increasing and improving counseling and support services for all students, including training and augmenting current counseling staff and exploring new models of counseling and guidance that enlist the help of teachers and administrators and external agencies.

### **4. Curriculum Support**

Strengthening the delivery of instructional services and technical support to teachers and school administrators in social studies, science, foreign languages, gifted and talented, computer education, the arts, physical education, and all other curriculum areas.

### **5. Early Childhood Programs and Early Intervention**

Providing more extensive and effective programs for pre-school, Kindergarten I and II, extended day classes, transitional first grades, and primary grades, and working with outside agencies to improve the quality of prenatal care and parenting support.

### **6. Facilities**

Upgrading school buildings that currently fall below acceptable standards of repair, lighting, heating, ventilation, classroom facilities, and equipment. This includes a plan to maximize the use of buildings, close and consolidate programs where necessary, and prioritize repairs.

### **7. Instructional Materials**

Providing teachers with the textbooks, educational materials, equipment, and supplies they need to implement the BPS curriculum effectively, and delivering materials and supplies in a timely manner.

### **8. Mathematics**

Improving the math achievement of students K-12 through improved teaching techniques and instructional materials, with special emphasis on creative problem-solving strategies and the use of technology.

### **9. Middle and High School Programs**

Strengthening the academic and non-academic offerings in all secondary schools so that a basic college preparatory sequence is available to all students and all students are able to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to have a real choice between employment and higher education.

**10. Parent and Community Support**

Increasing parent involvement in and support of their children's education, and increasing the involvement of the entire community - business, higher education, social service, cultural agencies, etc. - in improving instruction in Boston schools.

**11. Professional Development of Teachers and School Administrators**

Improving teaching and administrative leadership in all schools through programs that greatly expand the frequency, duration, quality, and variety of professional development efforts, and through an improved process of supervision, support, and evaluation.

**12. Reading**

Strengthening students' reading skills in all curriculum areas K-12 through improved teaching techniques, instructional materials, and cooperation with parents, with particular emphasis on higher-order/critical thinking, listening, speaking, and viewing skills.

**13. Safe and Orderly School Environments**

Implementing citywide and school-based strategies that allow all students to attend school in a climate in which they feel secure, respected, and able to concentrate on the business of learning.

**14. Special Education, Bilingual, and Vocational/Occupational/Career Education**

Improving implementation of the guidelines and regulations of programs for language-minority, 766, and vocational students so that youngsters in these programs receive instruction appropriate to their individual needs and closely aligned with the mainstream curriculum.

**15. Student Assignment Process and Quality Desegregated Education**

Working within Federal Court desegregation mandates to review the current assignment procedures, exploring opportunities to improve school integration by increased parent and student program choice, enhance the drawing and holding power of Boston schools, and improve our present system of transporting students.

**16. Writing**

Improving the teaching and learning of writing across all curriculum areas K-12, using training and materials in the "process" approach to writing, peer editing, holistic scoring, writing folders, effective use of computer word processing, and frequent student publishing.

## THE PROCESS FOR IDENTIFYING PRIORITIES

The list of sixteen initiatives is the result of an extensive outreach effort. In September, a Transition Team conducted interviews and identified major issues for immediate and long-range attention. During September and October, the Superintendent conducted ten community forums in which all members of the BPS community had an opportunity to present their concerns.

Beginning in November, our newly-formed Planning Office drew on the findings of the Transition Team and community forums to compile an initial list of long-range planning issues. The Superintendent's Advisory Council expanded this list to 45 issues at a December retreat, and provided suggestions on the issues. A 31-item list of possible priority issues (with a draft mission statement) was then distributed to principals, headmasters, and central office staff; 126 responded, and the results were used to further refine the list.

In mid-January, a 26-item questionnaire (with revised mission statement) was given to all members of the BPS community. 4,337 responses were received (3,191 from teachers, 341 from other school staff, 32 from principals and headmasters, 145 from other school-based administrators, 507 from parents, 32 from high school student leaders, 26 from central office administrators, and 63 from business, cultural, university, community, and other collaborators); these were tabulated and analyzed (see the chart on the final page of this packet).

During the same period, in-depth interviews were conducted with 64 key individuals inside and outside the BPS (community superintendents, principals, headmasters, teachers, central office administrators, parent leaders, and external collaborators) for further input. Then in early March, the Cabinet and Community Superintendents met, heard the outreach results, and recommended ten priority issues to the Superintendent. The Superintendent held a final round of meetings with staff, parents, and other advisors, and decided on a list of sixteen issues. On March 11, 1986, the School Committee approved this list, bringing the first phase of the Boston Education Plan to a close.

## THE QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

A great deal of information came from the 4,337 responses to the January questionnaire. Because the response was so large and respondents treated the questionnaire so seriously (one in five took the time to write in additional comments or suggestions), the results are clearly a valid picture of opinion in the BPS community, and they played an important role in the final choice of issues. A brief summary of findings is presented below, followed by a chart summarizing the rank order of issues among different constituencies.

1. There were very few criticisms of the revised mission statement. Asked to comment on a draft statement, only five individuals did so.

2. Looking across elementary, middle, and high school respondents and the figures on all teachers (who accounted for three out of four respondents), there was strong agreement on six issues (they were in each group's top ten):

- |                           |                       |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| - Instructional materials | - Writing             |
| - At-risk students        | - Counseling          |
| - Facilities              | - Gifted and Talented |

3. Looking at all constituencies, there was very strong agreement on three issues, which ranked in the top ten for all groups:

- Instructional materials
- Facilities
- Writing

4. There was strong agreement on four other issues, which ranked in the top fifteen for all constituencies:

- Adolescent issues
- At-Risk Students
- Counseling
- Math and Science

5. The next tier of issues attracted strong support but elicited a wider range of opinion:

- Reading and Social Studies
- Professional Development of Teachers
- Parent and Community Support

6. There were remarkably high overlap of the top ten lists of different constituencies:

- Teachers and parents agreed on 9 of 10.
- Parents and students agreed on 8 of 10.
- Teachers and external collaborators agreed on 7 of 10.
- Parents and external collaborators agreed on 7 of 10.
- Central office administrators and external collaborators agreed on 7 of 10.
- Principals/headmasters, school-based administrators, and central office administrators agreed on 5 of 10.

7. Several issues elicited major differences of opinion among different constituencies:

- Bilingual (2nd with central, 23rd with parents)
- High Schools (4 with students, 25 with principals/headmasters)
- Parent and Community Support (3 with students, 23 with prin/head)
- Promotion Policy Implementation (4 with prin/head, 24 with external)
- Testing (5 with prin/head, 25 with parents)
- Professional Development of School Administrators (7 with central, 26 with parents)
- Professional Development of Teachers (1 with external, 18 with parents)
- Computers (7 with parents, 25 with central)
- School-Site Management (6 with school admins, 23 with central)

8. Five issues were "written in" by between 100 and 300 people, indicating that significant numbers of respondents felt strongly about these omitted items that did not appear explicitly on the questionnaire:

- Discipline, with particular emphasis on excluding disruptive students from regular classrooms
- Planning and development time for elementary teachers
- Elementary specialist teachers in science, art, music, and physical education
- A higher entering age for kindergarten and first grade students
- Reduced class size, particularly in the primary grades

9. Hundreds of other issues received "write-in votes", but few were mentioned by more than a few individuals. The additional information from these responses revealed a great deal about what concerns people in and around our schools, and some of these comments will be useful in future planning.

Rank order, from 1st to 26th, of questionnaire responses from the following groups:

- |                            |                           |                                  |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. All teachers            | 4. Principals/headmasters | 7. Student leaders (high school) |
| 2. Elementary school staff | 5. School administrators  | 8. Central office administrators |
| 3. Middle school staff     | 6. Parents                | 9. External collaborators        |
| 4. High school staff       |                           |                                  |

	All Teach	* Elem Mid High			Prin Head	Admin	Par	Stu	Cen	Ext
1. Adolescent Issues	6	15	4	4	=14**	8	=7	2	=7	13
2. Arts	11	9	18	19	11	23	16	11	=19	8
3. At-Risk Students	2	2	2	3	=2	1	5	=14	1	=1
4. Bilingual	22	18	22	22	=14	19	23	=16	2	17
5. Computers and Other Technol.	12	14	16	13	=19	21	=7	=8	=25	21
6. Counseling	5	5	5	9	=14	11	11	=4	=3	=11
7. Early Childhood	21	10	25	26	13	26	17	26	=16	16
8. Facilities	3	3	3	2	1	2	1	6	=5	=5
9. Foreign Languages	26	25	24	23	24	24	24	=16	=19	=22
10. Gifted and Talented	9	8	8	8	12	=15	10	=16	=19	18
11. High Schools	20	26	23	5	=25	7	12	=4	9	=9
12. Instructional Materials	1	1	1	1	=2	3	2	1	=3	=5
13. Math and Science	8	7	9	12	7	=15	3	=8	=10	7
14. Parent and Community Support	10	13	7	7	23	13	6	3	=19	=9
15. Phys. Ed. and Athletics	15	11	20	25	=21	25	13	=22	=25	=22
16. Prof. Dev. of School Admins.	25	24	21	17	=21	9	26	=22	=7	14
17. Prof. Dev. of Teachers	13	17	10	15	10	4	18	=12	=5	=1
18. Promotion Pol. Implementation	16	21	13	11	4	5	20	=22	18	=24
19. Reading and Social Studies	7	6	11	10	=8	18	4	7	=14	3
20. School-Site Management	23	20	17	21	=8	6	15	=12	=23	=11
21. Special Education	18	16	14	24	=14	22	14	=14	=16	20
22. Student Assignment Process	24	19	24	18	=19	=15	19	=16	13	=24
23. Teacher Recognition	19	22	15	16	=14	14	22	25	=14	19
24. Testing	14	12	19	20	5	12	25	21	=23	=24
25. Voc./Occ./Career Education	17	23	12	14	=25	20	21	=16	=10	15
26. Writing	4	4	6	6	6	10	9	=8	=10	4

Number of Responses - 3191 1412 959 763 32 145 507 32 26 60

\* A breakdown of responses by elementary, middle, and high school, mostly teachers.

\*\* Equal signs (=) indicate issues tied for that position in the rank ordering.









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